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ABSTRACT

This publication highlights three topics from the 1992 National Institute on the Assessment of Experiential Learning. "Computer Conferencing at the National Institute: The Articulation of Knowledge and Writing Ability in the Assessment of Experiential Learning" (Evelyn F. Spradley) discusses the electronic conference held concurrently with the institute. The edited text of the conference focuses on the student's role in the definition of experiential learning. "How Adults Learn" (Barbara Waters Eklund) is a report of a session given by Elizabeth Kasl that introduced members of the advanced track to adult learning theory and later gave them an opportunity for role playing. This part contains a nine-item bibliography and the role-playing exercise used in the session. "Searching for an Identity: The Role of the Prior Learning Assessment Professional" (Barbara Waters Eklund) summarizes the session by Alan Mandell that raised questions as to the personal and institutional role of the individual in an institution charged with the responsibility of administering prior learning assessment. (YLB)

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ARTICULATING KNOWLEDGE, HOW ADULTS LEARN AND THE ROLE OF THE PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROFESSIONAL

Proceedings of the National Institute on the Assessment of Experiential Learning

June 13-16, 1992

Sponsored by Thomas Edison State College, in cooperation with CAEL

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Articulating Knowledge, How Adults Learn and the Role of the Prior Learning Assessment Professional: Proceedings of the 1992 National Institute on the Assessment of Experiential Learning

Edited by Debra A. Dagavarian

The 1992 National Institute on the Assessment of Experiential Learning covered a broad yet cohesive series of topics in the field of prior learning assessment. Participants hailed from all over the United States, and from Canada and Venezuela as well. Most found the National Institute to be a broadening experience, offering the expertise of a distinguished faculty, the latest in prior learning assessment (PLA) research and a network of other professionals from whom to learn.

For newcomers to the field of PLA, the beginning track offered sessions on identifying learning; documenting measuring, evaluating and transcripting learning; experiential learning theory; setting up policies and procedures for a PLA program; selecting and training faculty assessors; and portfolio development and academic program planning.

The advanced track offered participants sessions on the role of the PLA professional; how adults learn; adaptive learning styles; assessing employees' qualifications; options such as contract learning and independent study; and ethical considerations in marketing PLA.

The group as a whole was offered an overview of Thomas Edison State College, sponsor of the National Institute, and sessions on educational reform; historical forces shaping the educational technology to the PLA process; accreditation and PLA; and a hands-on workshop on evaluating prior learning portfolios.

Three topics from the 1992 National Institute agenda are highlighted in this publication. The first, *"Computer Conferencing at the National Institute: The Articulation of Knowledge and Writing Ability in the Assessment of Experiential Learning,"* by Evelyn Spradley, comes out of the electronic conference which was held concurrent to the Institute. Individuals who attended the National Institute were able to participate in the electronic conference through a number of personal computers we dedicated for this purpose at the conference center. Each participant was given a log-on, password and alias, so his or her comments could be offered anonymously. It will be evident upon reading the edited text of the electronic conference that participants of the National Institute have much to offer one another.

The second section of this publication, *"How Adults Learn,"* by Barbara Waters Eklund, is a report of the session given by Dr. Elizabeth Kasl. This presentation introduced members of the advanced track to adult learning theory, and later gave them an opportunity to role play. This part offers a bibliography and the role playing exercise used in the session.

The third topic, *"Searching for an*

Identity: The Role of the Prior Learning Assessment Professional," also by Barbara Waters Eklund, comes from the session by Dr. Alan Mandell. This discussion raised questions as to the personal and institutional role of the individual in an institution charged with the responsibility of administering prior learning assessment.

Reading the coverage of these three topics in this brief publication is not akin to having participated in the experiences themselves. As professionals in the PLA field have learned, there is value in experiential knowledge. It is my hope that these reports stimulate further discussion between you and your colleagues, so that we all may further the cause of prior learning assessment.

Computer Conferencing at The National Institute: The Articulation of Knowledge and Writing Ability in the Assessment of Experiential Learning

Evelyn F. Spradley

At the National Institute on the Assessment of Experiential Learning in June 1992, attendees were invited to use Thomas Edison State College's Computer Assisted Lifelong Learning (CALL) Network to participate in an electronic conference. The CALL Network was developed by the College to provide its students with access to the College via computer. CALL uses Computer Mediated Communications to facilitate communication between students, faculty consultants and advisors, and staff.

Advances in computer and telecommunications technologies have given rise to a set of communications facilities that collectively comprise an emerging discipline known as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). CMC is becoming an increasingly important teaching and administrative adjunct in the educational community, especially for groups whose members are temporally or geographically disparate. Two primary components of CMC are electronic mail and computer conferencing.

Most people are familiar with electronic mail, or E-mail, which is a messaging facility that allows users to send and/or receive mail items to and from other E-mail users. E-mail is essentially designed to accommodate one-to-one communication. Computer conferencing goes beyond this messaging ability and allows a group of users to have an "electronic discussion." If you have heard the term "group-ware," it has likely been used to describe software designed for computer conferencing. In a typical scenario, a discussion, or conference, is created by an individual who acts as a host, posting a topic and moderating the contributing entries by conference members made in response to the topic.

Discussion members access computer conferencing software from a terminal, PC or workstation, depending upon the type of network used. Conferencing software allows either synchronous or asynchronous access to users. In a synchronous discussion, all users must access the conferencing software at the same time and for the same duration, one person "speaks" at a time, and each contributing entry is displayed to all users. In general, though, asynchronous access is more widely used. It imposes no restrictions on the time or duration of access. Group members use the conferencing software at their discretion, view the topic of discussion and entries made by other participants, and add new discussion entries to further the discussion.

The CALL Network allows students access to the College from any CALL-compatible PC and uses an asynchronous approach for its discussions. As students at Thomas Edison State College are adults with many priorities and come from every state in America, CALL enhances the

educational process by offering time- and location-independent access to many College services.

The computer conference discussion sponsored at the National Institute this year appears below.

Topic:

In the evaluation of experiential learning, regardless of the method used, the student plays a role in the definition of such learning. The quality and extent of the student's role differs among institutions.

To what extent should a student be able to articulate his/her learning? Should we require that this articulation be done in writing? To what extent should a student's writing skills be evaluated and what standards applied in the assessment of experiential learning? How prepared should the institution be to support students with deficiencies (as measured by the standards we determine)?

1. If a student wishes to earn credit through prior learning assessment, it is imperative that he/she be able to articulate that learning in writing. It is reasonable to expect the student to write on a college level. This knowledge should be measured by means of a course description from a regionally accredited college or other acceptable means.

2. Traditional colleges have found that some students cannot write at the college level and add some sort of remedial instruction for those students. Occasionally, a school offers instruction for those who cannot write as a result of brain injury or other reasons.

3. Writing identifies a multitude of language skills and the ability to communicate effectively. What is problematic is the criteria used to establish minimum competency for an entering student. What constitutes minimum competency skills? Do the competency levels vary within departments? Within institutions in the same region?

4. If we require students to write correctly, and we *should*, we need to either provide support services to bring those with weak skills up to "snuff," or we need to establish some effective (and considerate) way to weed out inappropriate candidates. Then, of course, there is the issue of how expensive and time-intensive the support services can become.

5. The inability to articulate what one has learned will increase the suspicion of faculty and employers that credit has been given for the mere fact of existence through time rather than the ability to analyze the nature of individual experience in order to make college-level generalizations. An increase in such suspicion can render the student more alienated than ever.

6. Traditional faculty will need to have students not only articulate

their knowledge, but to articulate it in writing. Somehow, a written narrative of an individual's knowledge seems to gain greater acceptance by the "non-converts." Still, it is imperative that students be required to write correctly, and *all* college courses should, in some way, facilitate or teach writing.

7. Those of us who have taught college students know that there are different levels of writing ability. Very few are going to use flawless grammar, so we need to employ as a major criterion the student's ability to be understood.

8. The benefits of asking students to document their learning through writing is that we then have a public document that we can share with others to demonstrate our process. For example, we can show such to accrediting agencies or other institutions for validation and documentation. However, we also need to be open to other forms of communication through which students could show their learning, e.g., verbal discourse, video, objects d'art, etc.

9. It is most important for a student to write well. The student who needs assistance can participate in a three credit basic writing course; then, the student will submit the portfolio on, at least, a freshman college level. Faculty members interested in reviewing a portfolio are much more accepting of this nontraditional learning approach when materials read well.

10. Students should be submitting a written sample for portfolio evaluation. The student's writing sample should be evaluated also for the quality of writing. The supposition is that the student is going to be demonstrating college-level learning. Part of college-level knowledge assumes that a student should be able to communicate effectively.

11. If the learner lacks adequate writing skills to do the portfolio, what about the counselor's using interview, documentation, etc., to determine whether there is adequate learning to warrant a portfolio? If so, let the counselor arrange for remedial help on writing with specific attention to the deficiencies shown as the student tries to develop the portfolio. That could be done as part of a regular remedial course, as part of a mentoring one-on-one or as part of a portfolio development course in any of the formats recommended by Mandell and Michaelson (in their book, *Portfolio Development and Adult Learning: Purposes and Strategies*).

12. Of course, the student plays a role because it is "his" own learning which is, in a sense, unique. He/she defines his/her learning in the manner he/she has learned, and then tries to

relate it to course content. The quality and extent of students' roles differ among institutions because their basic way of operating differs also. If institutions were to adopt a similar mode of functioning, the student's role could be expected to be similar. This way, it would be easier to transfer portfolios from one institution to another, from one state to another, facilitating understanding and cooperation among those who work in PLA. The student should be able to articulate his/her learning much as he/she would be expected to meet course requirements. Course requirements should be pre-established by evaluators according to their expectations for learning outcomes for their traditional students.

13. There is no question that students should be required to articulate their learning via writing. Considering the pathetic current state of writing skills of many students today, I do not believe it is the responsibility of PLA programs to fill in this gap. Students *should* have college-level writing abilities prior to participating in PLA. Most schools provide writing support services, i.e., writing centers, tutors, etc., for their students. We should encourage students to take advantage of these services before enrolling in a portfolio program. Also, coming to portfolio assessment with these skills will contribute to the credibility of PLA and to the issue of quality control of the process. *Mastery of English Composition is essential!*

14. Expecting a student to be able to be articulate on paper is a minimum expectation for the person completing a portfolio. This does not preclude the addition of a taped musical score, a video tape, samples of creative writing or use of a foreign language as part of the documentation. (I suppose a computer program would be acceptable also!) But, the ability to communicate — with words — is the basis of liberal arts education and not something we should compromise.

15. The greatest gift that I have received from my liberal arts education has been an appreciation of the written word and the ability to be modestly articulate on paper. Those who subscribe to the premises of liberal arts education find the question academic. Of course, students must be articulate in writing. A better question might be, are the premises of liberal arts education still valid or were they ever valid? Is American Sign Language an "inferior" mode of communication? Doesn't the musical language of Beethoven speak for itself — or would we require a narrative and a course equivalent for him to earn credit? I worry about the elitist and exclusionary aspects of the definitions we use to fuel our

processes. The language of PLA needs to be reviewed and critiqued honestly and critically by its adherents or others will do it for us.

16. The PLA process should consist of the articulation and validation of prior learning. The institution should be prepared to help the student to perform this in any manner which achieves these goals. The portfolio method, a test or even oral exams should be usable. If the student requires significant assistance, a special course should be provided, with a small amount of credit.

17. The requirement that students use written material to verify PLA should be one of record keeping rather than verification of their writing skills, except insofar as writing skills are required by other courses. For technical courses, for example, students are often not required to write much. PLA should not force them to write very much more.

18. If the student does not know how to describe what he/she has learned, then it is more or less certain that he/she doesn't have the theoretical side of the appropriate theory-applied balance. Therefore, all students in the portfolio process must be able to distinguish between their experiences and their learning and be able to articulate that understanding. I would go further and suggest that any portfolio program that does not have a portfolio class is thus handicapped and will not be able to do a fully competent job of assessment. This portfolio class should have the following essentials components: 1) It should look backward with well-nurtured hindsight and be able to see the learner's various profiles clearly, i.e., what kind of learner am I, what more do I need to learn and how? That begins the looking forward, and the portfolio class is really the essential connector between prior learning and future learning. 2) Looking forward, the portfolio class should be a life and career planning foundation. It should build the learning future on the carefully analyzed learning past. If a portfolio results from the portfolio class (and it is not a necessary outcome if the analysis of the past suggests that there is no point in trying to dredge up and defend a petition for college-level credit), it should be — *first of all and most importantly* — a recital of *what has been learned*. It is somewhat tragic to see portfolios that are apparently written by someone with ability and with significant learning experiences, but which only recite where the person has been and what she or he has done.

How Adults Learn

by Barbara Waters Eklund

During Dr. Elizabeth Kasl's session on *"How Adults Learn,"* participants were provided with an overview of adult learning theories, resources for further study on this complex issue and the opportunity, through role-playing, to experience some of the theories discussed.

How adults learn, and what happens when people talk to each other, is a complex issue. Adults bring to every situation very different experiences and assumptions about what constitutes knowledge, thus affecting their intellectual development and their beliefs about "college-level" learning.

Dr. Kasl has observed that enthusiastic supporters of PLA are often frustrated by attitudes among some college faculty and administrators. Because PLA supporters understand that adults can acquire considerable college-level knowledge in the context of daily living, they find themselves baffled at what they consider wrong-headed and irrational biases. However, PLA proponents are also biased — in favor of PLA. Dr. Kasl believes that the most effective way to communicate with faculty is for PLA directors to support their enthusiasm with theoretical underpinnings.

To help the group accomplish this, she reviewed three developmental models of epistemology during the session. According to W.G. Perry, from his book, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*, there are stages of intellectual and ethical development through which people progress in sequence. The early stages are characterized by dualism, an epistemological stage during which a person believes that authorities have the right answer. When a dualist confronts diversity among the authorities, he or she believes that the right answer can be found by figuring out which authority is better. From dualism, people move into multiplicity and begin to believe that "everyone has a right to his/her own opinion; no one person's opinion is better than anyone else's."

The stage of relativism is next, when peoples' views become increasingly more complex. They come to understand that all knowledge is contextual and that there is a need for personal orientation. They make an initial commitment and experience the implications, and they affirm their identity among multiple responsibilities. Relativism with commitment follows.

Perry's ideas spawned hundreds of research projects. Curriculum design and counseling services were greatly influenced by his research. College freshman were typically considered to be at the stage of dualism in intellectual and ethical development.

Dr. Kasl was quick to point out that Perry's work was developed from research on Harvard students in the '50s and '60s, so that much of his work was done using upper-class males. A broader spectrum of

students was used, however when K.S. Kitchener and P.M. King developed their model of the seven stages of reflective judgement. The stages are similar to the Perry model, with students believing at first that knowledge is absolute and justification is not needed. The students then move through stages where they must find the right answer, need context, need evaluation and finally claim the knowledge as their own.

M.F. Belenky, B.M. Clinchy, N.R. Goldberger, and J.M. Tarule set out to investigate how applicable Perry's model was for women. In their study of 135 women who were diverse in socioeconomic class and education, the authors identified five epistemological perspectives. *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*, is well known for its description of what the authors call "procedural knowledge" or the "voice of reason." In contrast to the work of Perry and others where analysis and logic dominate the model for meaning making, *Women's Ways of Knowing* proposes two coequal procedures — one separate and one connected. For example, in order to understand poetry, a person using separate procedures for knowing will use rational analysis and apply the rules of literary knowledge. A person using connected procedures will attempt to understand the poet's intended meaning. The authors of *Women's Ways of Knowing* discovered that in the most developed perspective — constructed knowledge — there is integration, a more holistic picture of what they are trying to understand.

Dr. Kasl also reviewed with the group two conceptualizations of types of learning — one presented by J.D. Mezirow; the other by B. Bloom and D.R. Krathwohl. Mezirow believes that there are two forms of knowledge: instrumental and communicative. Instrumental knowledge is cognitive; it concerns what we can control, manipulate and predict. Instrumental knowledge is based on empirical evidence and validation. Communicative knowledge is learning to understand what others mean and making ourselves understood. It is based on rational discourse and it means dissociating oneself from the ideas of peers. Mezirow believes that communicative knowledge is the most important kind of learning.

Emancipatory knowing, a process of locating assumptions that are taken for granted and challenging those assumptions if they are inappropriate, can be used in either the instrumental or communicative ways of knowing.

Bloom and Krathwohl explored types of learning skills in the cognitive and affective domains. In the cognitive domain, there are hierarchical skills that must be developed before a person can begin evaluation. First, a person must have knowledge of specifics, procedures, and universal ideas. Comprehension follows and a person begins to translate, interpret and extrapolate. Application and analysis of elements, relationships and organizational principles follow. Then a person begins to synthesize and finally evaluate.

Evaluation is the most difficult skill, and evaluation merges with the affective domain as people receive information and respond to it.

Other steps include placing a value on the knowledge, organizing it and finally characterizing it.

A summary was presented by Dr. Richard Hamilton, vice president of Academic Affairs at Charter Oak College, on how people hold different philosophical perspectives on what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge relates to beliefs about learning from experience. This summary was intended to emphasize how important it is for educators engaged in the PLA experience to clarify their own and others' assumptions.

To demonstrate what happens in a group when people are discussing the same issue from a different set of experiences and assumptions, Kasl facilitated a role-playing exercise with the group. The setting was small group discussion, arranged by the PLA director, to discuss initiating a PLA program within a university. Also present at the discussion were three faculty members.

Each sub-group consisted of a PLA director and three faculty members: professors of art history, chemistry and English. First, participants were grouped with others playing the same role (for example, all PLA directors, all professors of history), to share what assumptions each might bring to the meeting. Then, groups were rearranged to simulate an actual meeting. A copy of the role play exercise is attached.

When the entire group reconvened, it was interesting to hear just how similar some of the assumptions were in each group. PLA directors assumed that everyone should be as enthusiastic as they were about the idea. They also assumed that everyone had the same information about the program and that it was correct information.

Faculty challenged much of the program and questioned the underlying motivation of the administration. Faculty assumed that the PLA director would conduct the assessment. Many considered it a threat to their job. Faculty assumed that the documentation for PLA would be multiple-choice tests. How, for example, could a student "test out" of English? Questions arose about what training would be available to faculty conducting the assessments. A big question among faculty had to do with salary. Would they be expected to do this work in addition to their other assignments? Would release time be allowed?

Dr. Kasl concluded that PLA directors face these and many other questions as they introduce PLA within their own colleges or universities. She believes that many college faculty, because they are trained in a specific discipline, tend to think of experience as not particularly important. Some use experiences only as examples in their classroom.

Role of Director of Prior Learning Assessment

Before you came to Lincoln, you worked in an external degree college where you acquired a passionate commitment to helping adults get college credit for what they already know. You were continually amazed at the sophistication and depth of knowledge that adults had acquired from lived experience. You brought a missionary zeal to creating the role of director of PLA at Lincoln. The last five years have been filled with frustration. Because the college president has expressed support for the new populations of adult students on campus, there is not much overt opposition to your efforts to develop procedures for testing and portfolio assessment programs. However, individual departments seem to block your efforts informally. They have added their own essay requirements to the testing programs and very small proportions of adults who take those tests actually pass them. Students get no guidance on how to create portfolios for assessment; in many departments, they cannot even locate a faculty or staff who will be willing to talk with them.

The dean supports the value of PLA programs, and sympathizes with your experience of frustration. However, the dean is also concerned that the good working relationships that have been built up with the other colleges over the years not be jeopardized and has suggested that you convene a number of small-group discussions with faculty to try to discover their unexpressed reservations and enlist their support. You are skeptical about the success of this effort, but are trying to approach it with an open mind. Personally, you think there are too many professors who don't care that much about the students. They seem more interested in their own research: many of them lecture from notes that are yellow with age. In your most skeptical moments, you think faculty oppose giving adults the credit they deserve because of faculty fears that jobs will be jeopardized.

Today you are meeting with faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences. You brought a secretary with you to take notes during the meeting.

Role of English Professor

You have been asked by your department chair to represent the department at a meeting with the director of Prior Learning Assessment. You don't know much about Prior Learning Assessment, except that it has something to do with testing out of beginning English courses. Personally, you are continually appalled at the poor writing skills of students and think everyone should take these introductory courses, where one of the department's prime goals is to hone student skills of written expression and analysis. The problem with "testing out" is that the tests seem to be multiple-choice tests that don't get at a students' ability to create cogent argument.

Role of Chemistry Professor

The department chair recently sent around a memo about a meeting with the director of Prior Learning Assessment. Faculty are being invited to express their opinions about the program, and you have one! Recently, you have had many adult students in your classes who work as laboratory assistants over at Bing Labs. These students think they know a lot about chemistry and chemistry procedures because of their work. Many of them have certificates from a local technical school's one-year program for lab assistants. Although it sometimes adds interest to class discussion to have these adults share examples from the "real world" of work, you are very clear in your opinion that they need a theory-base in chemistry that is best learned in the classroom. Recently, you have heard talk around the department about using some kind of test to allow these Bing Labs people to get beginning credit for chemistry. You are dead-set against it.

Role of Art History Professor

You are going to a meeting for faculty who are interested in the program for Prior Learning Assessment. You are not sure what the meeting will be about, but you do know it has something to do with adult students. You have been at Lincoln a long time, and have experienced the gradual influx of having adults in your classes. You absolutely love having adults in your class because of their appreciation for your subject and the richness that they sometimes add to class discussion. So many of them have actually been to the cities whose architectural histories are part of your courses; they have been to museums and seen works of art that for most of the younger students are only pictures on a slide. You enjoy the adults so much that you teach a non-credit art appreciation course for the College of Continuing Education. However, you have serious reservations about granting credit to people who haven't actually taken a class. You are not sure why, but you do believe that class discussion is the most important part of a student's learning. So much is shared in discussion that isn't really represented in a test. Although you are sympathetic to the needs of busy adults to get their college degrees, you think that this program for prior learning assessment probably should be limited to more technical courses — like those in the College of Business or Computer Sciences. You have heard that the College of Arts and Sciences is being pressured to develop a more active program for prior learning assessment and want to register your strong reservations.

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Searching for an Identity: The Role of the Prior Learning Assessment Professional

by Barbara Waters Eklund

Twenty years ago, when the notion of "prior learning assessment" was just beginning to be explored, supporters and detractors labeled it in many ways: "an abstract idea," "a significant broadening of our notion of learning," "an enigma" or "possibly the worst thing one could imagine happening in higher education." Today, hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States have some kind of prior learning assessment (PLA) program.

Long-time PLA advocate, Dr. Alan Mandell, who led this session on professionals in the field of PLA "searching for an identity," has been in the position of observing how PLA grew from an idea to a reality over the last two decades. He offered his insights and experiences to Institute participants.

Mandell believes that the thrust of our discussions have moved beyond the philosophical underpinnings (the defense of PLA as a genuine source of learning) to the more practical issues of how PLA is done. In fact, he has observed that PLA program structures and practices vary widely among colleges and universities. Mandell cited the Institute as a positive influence on the movement, because it helps promote dialog about both principles and practices.

But, as a sociologist, Mandell has been interested in observing another dimension of change. What happens within an institution when it creates a new program and places a person into the role of administering that program when no real history or precedent exists. "Conflict, confusion and debate occur regarding this person and this new role within our institutions," Mandell believes. He spent a great deal of time during the session identifying these points of tension, discussing them with the group and offering ways to think about what many PLA "experts" are experiencing in their jobs.

According to Mandell, major issues that emerge when this new professional role is being discussed fall into two problem areas: relationships and authority. Among the questions posed and discussed were:

1. Who in the institution is responsible for PLA?
2. In what department or office does that person work?
3. What is the person's title?
4. What authority does the person have?
5. To whom does the person report?
6. What kind of training does the person have?
7. What credentials is the person expected to hold?
8. What is the person's relation ship to the faculty? (Is he/she a faculty member?)

9. What is the person's relationship to the administration? (Is he/she an administrator?)

10. What is the person's relationship to students?

Three additional concerns emerged as Mandell and the participants discussed these questions:

11. What are the opportunities for development or advancement from a PLA position? Is it a dead-end job? Is there a meaningful career path within or outside the person's present institution?

12. Is there pressure on the person to recruit students, and if so, how does that expectation affect the maintenance of program quality?

(A number of participants mentioned that the PLA person is often at the core of tension if there is pressure for enrollments.) Indeed, in instances, PLA is introduced at a college or university because someone feels it will increase enrollment, especially of a new adult student population. When this particular expectation exists, the PLA person is put in the middle of debate about the morality of particular marketing strategies and the meaning of academic integrity.

The credibility of the PLA person in the larger institutional context was cited by Institute participants as playing an important role in how PLA itself is accepted at the institution.

Professional training and development (or lack of it) was discussed in great detail. Many felt that training occurs because of the personal desire of the PLA person to train, not because of pressure or opportunities from within the institution itself. Whether or not the person has faculty rank or defined professional status was seen as another indication of PLA's place in the institutional hierarchy.

Mandell believes that one way to enhance the image of PLA within the institution is to develop and offer a PLA course (or series of different courses) and include it in the general college "catalog." This course would be created and taught by a regular faculty member, or preferably team-taught with a PLA person and faculty member. In this way — and in others that were discussed — PLA can become part of the academic planning, and not be seen as a weak adjunct to an already solidified academic program.

One other critical quality of the work and organizational life of the prior learning assessment professional emerged in this discussion, and it concerned the nature of "woman's work" throughout institutions. To what extent, it was asked, is the experience of the PLA administrator often tied to more stereotypical qualities of "woman's work?" Is it perceived by colleagues (faculty and administration) as "secretarial" in nature? Is it understood to be less than fully academic because — at least in part — it is relegated to a set of more "menial" tasks an individual of higher status would not perform? This focus on the gender specific aspects of the identity of PLA practitioners became another

interesting tangent in this session.

The group discussed the fact that broad institutional support is critical to the success of PLA. If the support is not there, the program often becomes just a part of someone's job (i.e., the PLA "professional" as a part-time, lower-level administrator) and is never a priority.

Indications of the amount of support PLA receives can be measured in several ways: support for the office itself, training, time, budget, support services, salary of staff, and status of adult students and their needs within the institution.

In closing, Mandell challenged the group to answer two questions. If one could develop the ideal job description for a PLA director, what would it be? If one could design a professional development program for PLA directors, what would it include? He suggested that the answers to both questions might go a long way toward continuing to think through some of the problems of professional identity that were raised during the session, and that many PLA practitioners are struggling with at their home institutions on a daily basis.

Barbara Waters Eklund earned her B.S. in Public Communications at Syracuse University and her M.Ed. in Adult and Continuing Education at the Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University. She has been writing about higher education for 18 years.

Faculty of the Institute

Debra A. Dagavarian
Director of the Institute
Debra A. Dagavarian is the director of Testing and Assessment at Thomas Edison State College. Throughout her years in higher education as an administrator, faculty member and consultant, she has developed a strong commitment to serving the adult learner. Formerly assistant dean for Assessment at Empire State College, she also has been director of Evening Programs and director of Academic Advising at Mercy College. She holds a Doctorate in Education from Rutgers University. Dr. Dagavarian's publications range from articles on outcomes assessment to books on children's baseball fiction.

Harriet W. Cabell
Harriet W. Cabell is the associate dean and director of New College/External Degree Program, the University of Alabama. Speaker, trainer, educator and consultant, she has conducted programs nationwide and abroad for over 60 colleges, universities and professional organizations. Her training sessions focus on relevant, practical skills and techniques in a variety of areas including the philosophy and implication of prior learning programs, curricular issues and the management of adult learning programs. Dr. Cabell is certified as an Educational Specialist and holds a doctoral degree from the University of Alabama.

Ross Ann Craig
Ross Ann Craig is the vice president for Student Development at Delaware County Community College. She has developed and conducted a variety of workshops in adult development and assertiveness, and is a certified trainer in the Student Potential Program of CAEL. She has trained assessors working with students in the U.S. and Great Britain, and presented papers to a number of national and local professional groups, including the American Personnel and Guidance Association. Dr. Craig holds a master's degree in Education from the University of Florida, a doctoral degree in Education from Nova University and is a licensed psychologist.

Jerry Ice
Jerry Ice assumed the position of vice president for Academic Affairs at Thomas Edison State College in July 1983. As chief academic officer of the College, he is responsible for the development and review of the College's eleven degree programs and the program advising services provided to degree candidates. In addition, Dr. Ice's responsibility covers the offices of Academic Programs, Testing and Assessment, Test Development and Research, Registrar, Nursing and the Center for Directed Independent Adult Learning (DIAL). He received his doctoral degree in Administration and Supervision from Fordham University. Many of his publications have focused upon the educational needs and goals of adults returning to college.

Elizabeth Kasl
Elizabeth Kasl is a member of the faculty of adult and continuing education at Columbia University's Teachers College, where she teaches learning theory in the Adult Education Guided Independent Study (AEGIS) program. This nontraditional doctoral program for experienced practitioners uses students' professional experience as a laboratory for learning, and includes a curricular unit in which students examine their life experiences for the purpose of receiving academic credit. Dr. Kasl also is a member of the Group for Collaborative Inquiry, an inquiry group with particular interests in the learning processes that enable people to transform their experiences into meaningful personal knowledge.

Morris T. Keeton
Morris T. Keeton is the director of the Institute for Research on Adults in Higher Education (IRAHE), University of Maryland, University College. Formerly chief executive officer of CAEL from 1977 through 1989, he served as chair of the steering committee of the original CAEL when it was a project of the Educational Testing Service in the mid-1970s. Dr. Keeton was a member of the faculty and administrative staff of Antioch College from 1947-1977, where he served as professor of Philosophy, college pastor, dean of the Faculty, academic vice president, provost and vice president and acting president. He holds a B.A. and M.A. in Philosophy from

Southern Methodist University, and an M.A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy from Harvard University. Dr. Keeton also has been listed in *Who's Who in America* since 1969.

Amy K. Lezberg
Amy K. Lezberg is associate director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education at the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Formerly professor of English and associate dean for Academic Affairs at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences, where her responsibilities included faculty and curriculum evaluation and development, she selects and trains evaluation teams for New England's 200 institutions of higher learning. Dr. Lezberg, who holds a Ph.D. in English from Boston University, has presented and published papers on professional ethics, interpersonal/intercultural communication and ethnic literature.

Alan Mandell
Alan Mandell is associate dean and director of the Metropolitan Center of Empire State College, State University of New York. For nearly twenty years, he has served as a faculty member working with adults in the social sciences and history and as an administrator in the Empire State College program. Dr. Mandell is co-author, along with Elana Michelson, of the CAEL publication, *Portfolio Development and Adult Learning: Purposes, Contexts and Strategies*, and also edits *Kairos: A Journal of Social-Cultural Criticism*. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the City University of New York.

Gerald W. Patton
Gerald W. Patton is associate director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Formerly an assistant dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and director of the African and Afro-American Studies Program at Washington University in St. Louis, he has served as a field reader for the U.S. Office of Education and is a consultant on urban education. Dr. Patton holds the Ph.D. degree in History from the University of Iowa. He is the author of *War and Race: The Black Officer in the American Military 1915-1941*, and editor of *A Framework for Racial Justice, an Agenda for 1980s St. Louis*.

Barry G. Sheckley
Barry G. Sheckley is associate professor at the University of Connecticut in the Adult and Vocational Education program. He serves as CAEL research associate, has directed four CAEL Institutes and was CAEL's regional manager in New England for ten years. Dr. Sheckley's recent research has been in the areas of adult and experiential learning, and workplace learning. He received a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut and conducted dissertation research on adult learning projects. Dr. Sheckley describes himself as an "aging, long-distance marathon runner."

Evelyn Spradley
Evelyn Spradley is associate director for MIS Educational Technology at Thomas Edison State College. She is the project manager for the College's Computer Assisted Lifelong Learning (CALL) Network, a computer system that provides access to College services via personal computers. She supervises software and applications development, user support and Network management of the CALL systems, and serves as liaison to facilitate interdisciplinary Network concerns.

Urban Whitaker
Urban Whitaker has long been involved in experiential learning and career development. He has served as practitioner, teacher and administrator in cooperative education and other experiential learning programs at San Francisco State University since 1969. He has developed materials in a number of media (print, tape, slide, software) on the learning and assessment of career-transferable skills, and is the author of *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles and Procedures*. Dr. Whitaker, who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Washington, has consulted for numerous colleges and has performed multiple roles for CAEL: author, member of the Board of Directors, regional manager, presenter.

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